

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Death...✠... or Life?

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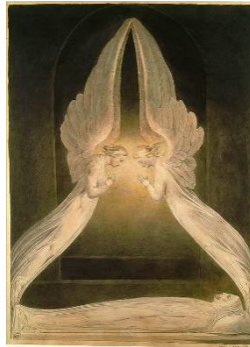
14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ
thehostapostolate@gmail.com

It is remarkable that something that happens to all of us, without fail, is often a subject that we will not, or are reluctant to talk about. Death in so many ways is still a taboo subject with many ways of saying it without owning its essence and that is the finality of earthly life. Over the past two hundred years different ways of pronouncing death have been used to shield us from its truth. Today the one favoured seems to be 'passed' as if someone has just passed us by. While curiously this is true for, they have passed to eternal life this is not the way that it is used. Other terms such as ceased to live, no longer with us, snuffed it, pushing up daisies, or in the vernacular, deceased, in a more legal frame and demise, all evade the word died or death. Truly some are meant to be kindly, especially for family and friends, but it makes the discussion and the exploration difficult.

This is even more true when we discuss mass death as a result of war, accident, or disaster. We speak of killing, fatality, genocide which again shields us from the death of perhaps thousands of people.

Since death, in the real sense, is a 'once only' experience, (though some experience a kind of death and are brought back through medical intervention) it is quite natural that we are perhaps fearful of it and prefer not to speak of it especially as we may not have any way of knowing what it is like. Perhaps by now you are thinking what a morbid subject why talk about it?

Yet it is essential that we do. Many people live with the fear of dying. Many people suffer grief and have no one to speak to as everyone avoids the subject. Some people go to extreme lengths to do everything to avoid it so making their own lives miserable. Others, only face it in any way, as life moves to a conclusion through illness or old age and at this point it becomes even harder to do so and for some more painful. This, for a Christian is perhaps even



stranger, if it is avoided, as the Passion and Death of Jesus is central to our whole belief system and crucial to our understanding of salvation.

Throughout the year we have many reminders of this in the Old Testament, Psalms, and the Gospels. The lives and death of Saints and the teaching of the church emphasises this and the Catechism speaks of the 'four last things' to be remembered.... Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.

In September we have the feast of The Triumph of the Cross, followed the next day by Our Lady of Sorrows. This in a way brings us to some of the realities of dying and grief. But the 'word' 'triumph' and the reason for it, is that death is followed by the Resurrection of Jesus.

One way that we avoid the subject, or many are propelled to avoid it is that the belief in the resurrection has somehow been either minimised, or ignored or worse still, rejected as a kind of fable. This was instigated and perpetuated at the time of Jesus death to remove the possibility of it having happened. How well the Pharisees understood its significance and how hard they tried to dismiss it and offer other explanations. Today we do so as faith wanes, and the culture expects all things to be perfect and undamaged, ageing is seen as a poor outcome of life and death a very unnecessary follow up.

It is even more strange that we avoid the subject as we are exposed to the realities of war on our screen and news daily but distance ourselves from the reality continually.

Yes, death does and will come to all of us. We do not know the 'hour'. We do not know the means, we do not know the place or how we will die. Surely, for such an important event we should prepare, not in an utterly miserable and depressing way, or a fearful one but one that gives us hope and courage to face the future. For the future is indeed certain.

We've all got a terminal illness. It's called life.

Fr. Benedict Groeschel

Death is not the end product but the means to achieve the very thing we so want to preserve in this life, such as happiness and contentment peace and dignity.

We know that we are the children of God (John1:12) and that the Lord cares for each one of us. What we will be in the future, and there is a future, has not been revealed exactly but we know that we are destined to everlasting life.

Though not obliged to believe the many revelations over centuries of the realities of 'after life' such as in Apparitions, it is also strange that those who accept these, still fear death, as many point to the beauty and reality of an afterlife.

We often hear that those who have experienced the closeness of death and been spared are more reconciled to the realities and often say they now see things differently. Not only do they value life as a gift but are less reluctant to accept the conclusion. This has been a preparation for the inevitable outcome which they have experienced.

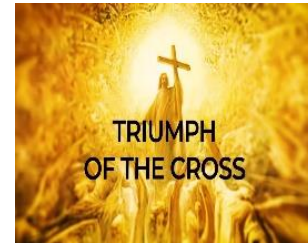
As I know personally there is nothing more sound than to realise that life is finite and that one day we progress to a life of infinitely more value. This of itself brings a kind of peace and a joy of living and giving.

We must also remember that we are not the sole members of the universe and that those who live on and follow us have a rôle to play. We have to hand on to others who continue after us a holy legacy of good things.

On reading one of the readings last month about Moses and how he never reached the 'Promised Land' I pondered this. He was shown it. He took the People of God to it. But he was not allowed to enter himself. Some say it is because he did not always obey... but is considered one of the greatest prophets. It seemed a little unjust. Yet he was seen with Elijah and with Jesus at the Transfiguration, a foretaste of Resurrection. But there is another possible explanation of why he did not enter the Promised Land. Joshua was to be the next leader. Moses himself had laid his hand on him. Maybe, if Moses had been around people would not follow Joshua...

Moses had to leave this life to make room for him. We too are part of a great creation but only a part....We are asked to die to self and surrender our lives to God and to live for His Glory and the good of our neighbour. Death enables us to reap the reward of a life well lived and rejoice with Him for all eternity. Fear not death but welcome eternal life.

Halina Holman 2023©



Pope Francis

"Our whole life appears like a seed that will have to be buried so that its flower and its fruit can be born. It will be born, along with everything else in the world. Not without labour pains, not without pain, but it will be born. And the life of the risen body will be a hundred and a thousand times more alive than we have tasted it on this earth."

Rome, August 2022

Prayer... 'Day'

*Let me not wait for tomorrow,
Or while away today.*

*Let me not assert
authority over the unknown.*

*Let me not ponder
the maybes or can Be's*

*Or even the will Be's
of everyday...*

*...Let me step into
The now of unknowing
With a breath
And see
The twinkle of God's eyes
Ah yes, only today.*

HH '23

Feast Days in September

3rd Twenty second Sunday in Ord. Time

5th S. Teresa of Kolkata

8th The Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary

10th Twenty third Sunday in Ord. Time

12th The Holy Name of Mary

13th St. John Chrysostom

14th The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

15th Our Lady of Sorrows

16th Ss. Cornelius & Cyprian

17th Twenty fourth Sunday in Ord. Time

20th The Martyrs of Korea

21st St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist

23rd St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

24th Twenty fifth Sunday in Ord. Time

26th Ss. Cosmas & Damian

27th St. Vincent de Paul

28th St. Lorenzo Ruiz & companions

29th Ss. Michael, Gabriel & Raphael, Archangels

30th St. Jerome